1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

TIN CITY

754 Christine Nelson,* a middle-aged Negro woman, admitted
(115) that she, too, believed in witches and ghosts and that she knew there was a good deal of conjuring going on in the neighborhood.[15]

"Cunjuh is magic some folks is bawn wid," she explained. "It gibs um powuh obuh tings udduh folks dohn unnuhstan.[32a, *] Dey kin wuk dat powuh fuh good aw bad. Dey kin put spells on yuh an lif duh spell some udduh root wukuh hab put on yuh.[6] Ef a root wukuh break yuh spirit, he kin hanl yuh lak he want tuh. A witch is a cunjuh man dat somebody paid tuh tawment yuh. I know uh folks dat wuz rid so much by witches dat dey jis pine way an die."[69b]

[115] The case of a man who had been conjured was described to us by James Moore.** "He jis mope roun—couldn git spirit nuff tuh wuk. Den all ub a sudden he swell up an duh doctuhs couldn tell wut ail im. We tink he gonuh die.[15] Den
754 long come a man we call Professuh.[42] He say ef we kin git
•755 any money he kin lif duh spell.[6] We git some money tuhgedduh and he go out in duh stable an wen he come back he hab a lill black sack. He say dis hab duh cunjuh in it.[6a, b] Den he bile up some mullen leaves and bathe muh frien in um. He tell us tuh keep on doin dis. In two weeks duh swellin
754 go down an he all right. Deah's root men wukin gense yuh all duh time. Dey kin lay tings down fuh yuh an ef yuh walk obuh dis, yuh fall unduh duh spell. Less yuh kin fine somebody else wut kin wuk roots an kin lif duh spell,[6] yuh is doomed.

787 "I kin see duh spirits uh people fo dey die.[59a] Duh spirit
794 is most lak duh natchul pusson but wen I see it I know dat
763 duh pusson will soon die. Attuh a pusson die, I see duh ghos[56] an sometime dey is lak animals,[54] and den agen lak
775 people, jis floatin long lak a piece uh papuh in duh win. Sometime dey hab no head aw feet an dey's alluz dressed in wite.

* *Christine Nelson, Tin City.*
** *James Moore, Tin City.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 git tuh pinin way.[15] Duh doctuh he caahn hep me none. Finally I went tuh a root man.[48] He say right off somebody done gib me a dose. He say 'I'll be roun tuhnight. Git some money tuhgedduh cuz I caahn do yuh no good less yuh staht off wid some silbuh.'

754 "Wen he come dat night an git duh silbuh, he look all roun
• 755 duh house an den dig a hole unduh duh doe step. Deah he fine a bottle. He tro it in duh fyuh an holluh, 'Git gone, yuh debil.' Attuh dat I git bettuh, but I ain nebuh bin tuh dat uhmun's house since. An I dohn lak tuh talk about it."

115 789 Another octogenarian, Thomas Smith,* told us that the same magic power that Moses had used when he turned his rod to a snake before Pharoah still exists today among Negroes.

789 "Dat happen in Africa duh Bible say. Ain dat show dat Africa wuz a lan uh magic powuh since duh beginnin uh histry? Well den, duh descendants ub Africans hab duh same gif tuh do unnatchul ting. Ise heahd duh story uh duh flyin Africans [49c] an I sho belieb it happen. I know doze wut could make a pot bile widout fyuh. Jis sit it anyweah on duh flo aw in duh yahd an bile deah meals. Dey could make a buzzud row a boat an hab a crow fuh pilot.

"Long yeahs ago deah wuz a cunjuh man wut could git yuh out uh jail by magic. A frien uh mine at Hilton Head git rested fuh stealin. He sen fuh duh cunjuh man [48] an duh man say, 'Dohn worry. Duh jedge gwine tun yuh loose.' Wen duh hour uh duh trial come, duh cunjuh man tell me, 'See dat bud on duh cote house? I sen im up deah. Deah wohn be no trial.' Sho nuff, wen duh case wuz call fuh, duh jedge git tuh suchin roun tuhnin up ebryting tuh fine duh chahge gense muh frien. Attuh wile he git disgusted an tell duh cote, 'Case dismissed. I caahn fine duh papuhs.' Wen we git outside duh bud done fly away."

[115] Thomas Smith's reference to flying Africans caused us to

* *Thomas Smith, 37 Ann Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

mention this story to Carrie Hamilton,* whom we next visited.

"I hab heah uh dem people," said this seventy year old woman, who has the tall, heavy frame of a plantation hoe hand. "Muh mudduh use tuh tell me bout em wen we set in duh city mahket sellin vegetubbles an fruit. She say dat deah wuz a man an he wife an dey git fooled abode a slabe ship. Fus ting dey know dey wuz sole tuh a plantuh on St. Helena. So one day wen all duh slabes wuz tuhgedduh, dis man an he wife say, 'We gwine back home, goodie bye, goodie bye,' an jis like a bud dey flew out uh sight.[59c]

"Muh mudduh use tuh tell me all kine uh ting cuz I wuz bawn wid a caul [4] an wuz diffrunt frum duh res. Ebry now an den I see ghos. Dey hab all kine uh shape, sometime no head, sometime no feet, jis floatin by.[59a] Dey is duh spirits uh duh dead, but ef yuh dohn meddle in deah business, dey ain gwine meddle in yoze."

Not only among these older Yamacraw Negroes but among younger residents we found a solid background of ancestral beliefs and practices, for here little of modern progress has touched the dirt streets, pebbly walks, and tumble down houses of another day.

Ellen Dorsey,** forty years old, born in Savannah, gave us a detailed description of the conjure her husband put on her.

"Me an him couldn git long so I lef im. He went tuh a root doctuh [48] fuh him tuh make me come back home. Den duh root doctuh put me down sick so duh wite people I wuz wukin fuh would dischahge me. I had pains runnin up an down muh whole body, an I knowed I wuz cunjuhed but uh wouldn gib in.[15] I call me in a man who use tuh try tuh sell me a han tuh wawd off cunjuh.[13a, c, 4] He rub muh legs down twice a day, an one mawnin a big black snake run outuh muh big toe.[50] 'Deah goes duh devil,' say duh root man, an frum

* *Carrie Hamilton, 530 West President Street.*
** *Ellen Dorsey, 518 West Congress Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 755 den on I git bettuh. A cousin uh mine git a dose once an wen duh root doctuh rub uh all ovuh wid a cleah liquid, bugs begin crawlin out of uh skin.[5, 15] Duh doctuh say if she had wait one mo day it would uh bin too late."

754 "Did your husband ever try any more conjure on you?" She laughed with great amusement. "He sho did. He went tuh duh same man dat cuo me an give him thutty dolluhs tuh make me go back tuh him. One Sunday attuh chuch wen I ain had thought of evuh livin wid muh huzbun agen, I walked out duh chuch straight tuh muh huzbun's house. An dis happen," concluded Ellen, "widout duh root man evuh seein me. I didn know nuthin bout it till long attuh we wuz reconcile."

115 Evans Brown * is only fifty years old. To see him going daily about his duties as janitor of the West Broad Street Negro School, no one would suspect unusual powers at work beneath his good-natured exterior. Yet he not only said that he believed absolutely in the supernatural but proudly asserted that he could work magic himself.

775 787 "It come natchul tuh me, duh powuh tuh do suttn ting. Since I wuz lill I could see ghos, sometime two feet off duh groun, sometime walkin. Wen muh haiah rise on en an hot eah pass muh face, I tun roun an deah's alluz a ghos. Lots uh time it's duh spirit ub a frien. Many wintuh mawnins wen I go tuh school early tuh make fyuhs, uh heah doze open an shut an den uh see duh ghos dat do it.[59]

754 "I didn know I hab powuh tuh do tings till muh mudduh wuz fixed. Yuh know, a man kin fix a dose fuh a suttn pusson an only dat pusson will git caught. Fo women wuz in duh house wid muh mudduh, but duh doe knob wuz dressed fuh huh. All dem women pass out befo she did, all tuhnin duh knob. But wen she come out, a pain strik uh in duh side. We hab doctuhs but nuttn done no good. Uh whole side tun black an she die.[15]

* *Evans Brown, West Broad Street School.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

I know folks right now dat kin make duh spirits uh dead people come back.[56]

"Wen I wuz jis growin up I knowd a boy dat hab a strange powuh. Eben ef he wuzn wid duh udduh boys he could tell each one wut he bin doin.[22a,•] One day attuh we grown up he say dat he could bring back folks dat hab lef town an gone away.

"Now deah wuz a uhmun whose huzbun hab lef uh. Dis uhmun wuz jis frettin uhsef tuh det. Muh frien go tuh uh an say, 'I will cause yuh huzbun tuh come back tuh yuh. I will chahge yuh ten dolluhs. Yuh needn pay me till he come back, but ef yuh dohn pay me den, he wohn stay.'

"In a week's time duh uhmun's huzbun wuz back. He stay home till he die. Duh uhmun pay muh frien in piece payments till she pay im duh ten dolluhs."

Living in a dirt lane on the fringe of Currytown is Chloe West • who was born at White Bluff and cannot remember her exact age. She told us that she frequently sees ghosts [59] and that a spirit warns her when anything out of the ordinary is about to happen.[22a,•]

"One time I wuz bodduhed by duh folks nex doe wut wuz tryin tuh cunjuh me. Somebody tell me tuh git some hot watuh an tro it wen I heah duh noise. Jis as I git duh watuh hot, duh spirit ub a wite uhmun I use tuh wuk fuh peahed an tell me tuh pray an duh witches would go way. Attuh she spoke, duh witches went out an nebuh did bodduh me since. Duh witches wuz two men. One ub um went crazy an duh poeleece foun duh udduh one out in duh woods. He died in duh po house.

"One night I heah a noise at muh winduh. A voice say, 'Chloe, dohn go neah duh winduh.' I stop a minute, den uh go tuh duh winduh. Some kine uh powduh wuz trone in muh face dat bline me.[9b] Den duh voice tell me tuh wash muh

• *Chloe West, 823 West Waldburg Lane.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

face quick in karisene. I do dat an duh blineness leab me.

"Anudduh time duh uhmun wut lib nex doe want me tuh moob an she git a cunjuh bag an bury it unduh muh step.[16] Duh spirit wahn me agen an tell me a man would fine duh cunjuh fuh me. Duh nex day Doctuh Johnson, a root man,[48] come by. He say sumpm wuz laid down fuh me an he would take it up fuh fifty cent. I paid him duh money. He come back dat night, dig unduh muh steps, an take out a bunl. It hab some dut an some haiah[10] an sulphuh in it. Doctuh Johnson say it wuz grabe yahd dut.[9] Bin a long time since I bin bodduhed but uh sho belieb in all dem tings.

"Duh fus time I ebuh see ghos wuz long yeahs back. Once, wen I wuz young an receivin compny, deah wuz two men comin tuh see me. I lak one man duh bes an duh udduh man wuz jealous. Well, duh jealous man die. Aftuh dat many a time uh see a shadduh lak him come right up tuh muh doe an disappeah. One night he come, stretch he ahm cross duh doe, an say jis as plain as anyting in a big loud voice, 'Is dat udduh man still comin roun yuh?' I wuz sked stiff."

D. C. Kelsey,* who has been blind for six years, told us that conjure had caused the loss of his sight.

"An I ain had duh money tuh git nobody tuh tun dis ting back on duh one dat put it on me," he complained.

He looked pleased when a piece of money was placed in his hand. When we asked why he blew on the coin, he smiled slowly. "Dat make mo luck. It'll hep me tuh git mo. Yuh know, a root man, he wohn take money out yuh han. He tell yuh tuh put it on duh table aw duh shef."

We encouraged him to continue on the subject of root men.

"Dey kin fix yuh wid mos anyting," Kelsey said. "Duh chinch bug is use a lot an Ise sked ub em. I wouldn put muh han on dem ting fuh ten dolluhs. I hab a sistuh name Ida Walker wut wuz fix wid candy. She ate duh candy an den

* *D. C. Kelsey, 521 West Gaston Street, Frogtown.*

FROGTOWN AND CURRYTOWN

754 uh ahm swell up an tun blue. Yuh could see lill animals runnin up an down uh ahm. She got a root doctuh name
754 Sherman. Soons he look at it, he know wut it wuz. He come
•755 Toosday an he gie uh a rub tuh use, and he say tuh rub down an he would come back Friday. Wen he come, duh tings all done come intuh duh finguhs. He tuk a basin wid some wome watuh, an he put muh sistuh han in it. Den he ketch hol uh duh han an duh tings run out in duh watuh. Dey wuz puppy dogs.

754 "He ax uh did she want em tuh go back weah dey come frum, an she say yes. So he say he know duh man wut sen em, an he went tuh duh winduh an tro duh watuh wid duh puppy dogs in it in duh direction uh duh man house an say, 'Go.' One week latuh duh man wuz in he fiel ploughin an he drop duh plough an fall down. Wen duh people git tuh im, all he could say wuz, 'Dis is my wuk. Dis is my wuk.' He went plumb crazy an died, but muh sistuh got well an fine. She lib neah Millen now."

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

we would be woke up by a loud bangin noise. Ef we look out duh winduh we could see dis spirit. He wuz alluz wanduhin roun. Ebry now an den he would tro a rock at a ole gasoline tank an it would make dat noise we heah.[55] We alluz use tuh tink deah wuz buried treasure neah an dis spirit wuz gahdin it.[61] I nebuh did look fuh duh treasure, I dohn wahn tuh fool wid no spirits. Attuh a time dey tuk down duh house an duh spirit nebuh did come back no mo."

Another victim of conjure,* a Negro man of about eighty-eight, told us that although he did not usually believe superstitious tales, his own strange experience had forced him to realize that "folks kin fix yuh." "One time I fall down sick frum a puhculeyuh disease. Nuttn didn do no good till uh hab a root uhmun come in. Right away she tell me a enemy done put down a dose fuh me.[15] She say I wuz fined in fish. Well, den, she tell me tuh drink a haffuh pint uh wiskey and tro way duh udduh res uh duh pint. Attuh uh done dis, uh git well agen.[6]

"I knows a case uh fixin right now. It's a young man wut dohn lib fah frum yuh. He alluz complainin bout crickets crawlin unduh his skin an some uh duh neighbuhs say dey see um. I blieb dis mus be so cuz deah's a uhmun roun yuh wut kin make a han tuh put any kine uh insec in yuh body.[5] She kill duh insec an grine it tuh powduh an rub it on duh skin uh duh pusson aw gib it tuh um tuh drink. Wen it entuh duh body, it tun back intuh insec, sometime a lizud aw a frawg aw a snake."

The old man continued, "Ise had plenty sperience bout root wuk,[48] but I alluz try tuh keep way frum dat kine uh folks. I membuh ole Doctuh Sheppard who use tuh op-purate yuh. He hab hunduds uh folks come tuh him day an night. He mustuh been bery good.

"Deah wuz a uhmun name Clara an she wuz good too. She use tuh ketch lots uh Doctuh Sheppard's customuhs. I

* *Charles Singleton, Springfield.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 789 good luck han tuh weah [6, 12a, c, d] so no udduh root wukuh could hahm uh. Attuh dis duh ebil spell went away an duh woman wuz cuod."

115 One of the interesting characters of the section is Ellen Jones,* better known as "Pipe Ellen" because of a very evident liking for tobacco. The old woman, an ex-slave, claims to be almost one hundred and twenty-two years old and walks almost daily from Springfield to Savannah. Win- [291] ter and summer, her frail figure is snugly buttoned into a heavy top coat, so long that the hem trails on the ground. On her white head she wears a dark wool skull cap.

754 "Pipe Ellen" told us that she firmly believed in conjure and in proof of this she related the following instance: "Right yuh in Savannah a uhmun wut claim tuh be muh frien root-mahk me.[15] I ain fraid tuh tell uh name, cuz she dead now. It wuz Flossie Hopkins.

"She fix me wid tuhbaccuh. Yuh see she knowed I lub tuhbaccuh. She wuk a root on me so strong dat she put a big snake in muh bed, an uh could feel tings moobin all tru muh body. I could feel duh snake runnin all tru me.[5, 60] Den I heah a noise an it keep on, so uh say tuh muhsef, 'A snake is in yuh.' I git up an set duh lamp in duh middle uh duh room. Duh snake show up. I close all duh cracks roun duh house, so nuttn couldn git out.

"Nex ting I know dat uhmun wuz knockin at muh doe. Wen I let uh in, she grab dat snake, tro it cross uh shoulduh an walk out.

754 "Ef uh hadduh kill dat snake, a man tole me, it sho would uh bin Flossie Hopkins. He tole me tuh git a box uh Debil • 755 Lye. Denne dug unduh muh doe step an took a bunle uh 789 roots. Deah wuz red peppuh, an sulphuh, an salt, an some udduh kine uh powduh. He sprinkle dis all roun duh place an say I need nebuh be fraid cuz dis would kill any cunjuh put down fuh me." [6]

754 During the course of an interview, which was held later

* *Ellen Jones, rear 1304 Stiles Avenue.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 with another woman • in the community, we again discussed the subject of conjure. This woman told us, "Deah's plenty cunjuh in dis neighbuhhood. Deah wuz a man and his wife libed yuh. Duh man couldn git wuk an he went away. Attuh he lef, duh wife wuz took sick; dey say she wuz cunjuhed,[15] an dey sen fuh duh huzbun. Wen he git home he git a root doctuh tuh visit uh.[48] Duh root man go tuh duh back step an dig a hole, an deah he fine nails an sulphuh an haiah an some grabeyahd dut. In duh pilluhs an mattresses an in duh dressuh draws, dey fine duh same ting. Dem tings run uh crazy. She ack queah an run away an stay fuh days at a time. Duh root doctuh moob duh cunjuh an she wuz cuod. He gie uh duh powuh tuh disappeah an appeah any time she want tuh. I heah bout lots uh folks wut kin disappeah lak dat. Duh ole folks use tuh tell bout duh people wut could take wing an fly right back tuh Africa.[69c]

• [755] [789]

"I alluz know deah wuz witches an ghos. Attuh I gits married muh huzbun tell me dat he sees ghos.[59] He describe duh ghos tuh me. It wuzn long fo I wuz seein duh ghos too. Sometime he would say tuh me, 'Deah go a spirit. It jis floatin long, ain got no head.' Sho nuff, deah I would see a shadduh floatin by me.

775 787

"Sometime muh huzbun see duh spirit uh some frien ub ours. Dat wuz a sho sign sumpm gwine happen tuh dat pusson, eeduh sickness aw det. One day he see a ghos ub a close frien uh his. Duh nex day he git a tiligram wut say duh frien wuz dead.

[763]

"I knowd folks dat wuz witches; dey nebuh bodduhed me but jis picked on muh huzbun. Ain a night hahdly pass wen dey ain ride im.[60] Deah wuz a uhmun libed on duh same street we did. We use tuh call uh An Sally, duh cunjuh uhmun. She could tell fawchuns[22] an gib hans[8c, d] an fix yuh enemies fuh yuh. Shè ain seem tuh like muh huzbun. Ef she pass our house durin duh day, dat night she come an

754 791

754

• *Dorothy Johnson, 1201 Murphy Avenue.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Queen stands at the Bishop's right, facing the congregation. The music blares forth with renewed intensity and the entire multitude, led by the uniformed guard, passes in single file before the throne. As members approach the Bishop, they pledge themselves to him by removing their hats and bowing low. In the midst of all this commotion "Daddy" sits, a remote, detached figure, his downcast eyes seemingly indicating that he is scarcely aware of this carefully planned reception.

Between the musical numbers several of the congregation rise and loudly testify to the miracles that Bishop Grace [22] has performed in their behalf. A flourishing sale is conducted in consecrated handkerchiefs and copies of a newspaper published by the cult. These are believed to possess unusual healing powers.[8, 12] A ready market is also found for large pictures of the Bishop, for it is said that to chew up his likeness will cure many kinds of illness.

The grand march is spectacular. All those present assemble in the large center aisle. The band strikes up a lively measure and the procession starts. At the front of the church the line of march divides, half the people going down one side aisle, the other half going down the opposite one. At first the procession is orderly and fairly quiet, but as time passes, the music becomes increasingly loud. Above the brass instruments the steady throb of the drum can be heard. Voices are raised in accompaniment, feet stamp, shoulders sway, and hands clap.[19]

Around and around the procession winds. The singing and dancing become wilder and more abandoned. Many now close their eyes, dancing blindly and stumbling into those near them and into the benches and posts. By this time the music is almost deafening and the noise made by the worshipers is equally loud. The muscles of their bodies twitching convulsively, they continue in their dance.[46]

Occasionally one of the participants stops, and, regard-

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

759 759 787 to consult me an I know head uh time zackly wut kine uh herbs tuh gadduh in awduh tuh cuo im."

He had been born with this power to foretell the future, 787 he asserted.[22a,*] "Outside uh dreams," he went on, "I kin use leaves an coffee grouns an a suttn kine uh seed known as duh sensitive aw jumpin seed. Yuh fine deze seeds at suttn times long duh sho uh duh Wes Indies. Yuh hab tuh keep duh seeds in a closed containuh aw dey will jis disappeah. Tuh tell fawchuns yuh spread duh seeds out fo yuh on duh groun an dey'll moob bout. Dey moob cawdn tuh wut yuh tinkin. Tellin fawchuns is jis a mattuh uh concentratin yuh imagination on suttn tings. Den ebryting will appeah fo yuh."[22b-d]

754 Conjure is being practiced all the time, the root doctor informed us. "Frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies an duh people den fali ill an sometime die.[5, 15] Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh 789 story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis.[69c] Not long ago I see a man vanish intuh tin eah by snappin his finguhs. Hab yuh heahd uh duh man wut wuz put in prison in Springfield? He jis flied away frum duh jail an wuz nebuh caught agen.[68b, 69c] Yes, ma'am, I know wut yuh hab tuh hab in awduh tuh fly aw vanish away, but it is mighty hahd tuh git. It's duh bone ub a black cat."

(115) A woman* informant, too, had heard about flying Africans and persons who could disappear at will.[69c] She said also that she had often been ridden by witches. "Dey seem tuh come frum noweah an staht chokin yuh.[59] Witches an root men hab duh same magic powuh."

764 Relative to the custom of placing food and possessions on a new grave this woman spoke earnestly. "Dis wuz a common ting wen I wuz young. Dey use tuh put duh tings a (775) pusson use las on duh grabe.[47] Dis wuz suppose tuh satisfy

* *Florence Postell, 928 West 51st Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Tatemville

361 EXTENDING SOUTHWEST FROM SAVANNAH OVER A widely scattered area is a section known locally as Tatemville. This settlement is inhabited largely by Negroes, some of whom are survivals of ante-bellum days.

551 It is interesting to note that a number of these old people in speaking of their fellow-slaves frequently prefix "Golla" to the given name.*

115 H. H. Miller,** an educated old man of this community, who has acquired considerable wealth, stated, "I knew many of the 'Golla' tribesmen who were brought to this country, when I was a boy. I think some can be found aroun these pahts now."

759 [115] A palsied old man, William Newkirk,† who said he was born on the Newkirk place, obligingly replied to questions concerning root doctors and conjure, "Well, duh root doctuh wuz all we needed. Dey wuz bettuh dan duh doctuhs now-a-days. Deah wuzn all uh dis yuh cuttin an wen yuh sick, duh root doctuh would make some tea an gib yuh aw sumpm tuh rub wid an das all. Den fo yuh know it, yuh wuz all right.[48a] He would fix tings fuh yuh ef somebody done put sumpm down fuh yuh. Deah wuz many ways tuh wuk it. Sometime he would gib yuh sumpm tuh weah wid yuh aw sumpm tuh take."[6]

[755] [789] 115 Spirits are a reality to Esther Jones,‡ obviously a woman

* *See Introduction.*
** *H. H. Miller 46th and Pearl Streets.*
† *William Newkirk, Tatemville.*
‡ *Esther Jones 308 West 46th Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

WHITE BLUFF

789 "Muh gran say ole man Waldburg down on St. Catherine own some slabes wut wuzn climatize an he wuk um hahd an one day dey wuz hoein in duh fiel an duh dribuh come out an two ub um wuz unuh a tree in duh shade, an duh hoes wuz wukin by demsef. Duh dribuh say 'Wut dis?' an dey say, 'Kum buba yali kum buba tambe, Kum kunka yali kum kunka tambe,' quick like. Den dey rise off duh groun an fly away. Nobody ebuh see um no mo. Some say dey fly back tuh Africa. Muh gran see dat wid he own eye."

556 782 He had heard that on Blackbeard Island it was customary in the old days for a group of men to agree upon a location in which to bury their money, whereupon one of them would voluntarily offer his life and be put to death at the hands of the others, thereby enabling his spirit to stand guard and protect the treasure.

785 786 787 "I seen a spirit muhsef once wen I wuz a young man," Prince continued. "It wuz late in duh aftuhnoon. I wuz cookin crab an uh look up an see a man widout a head. I look away, den uh look back tuh weah uh see im, an sho nuff deah he is in plain sight. I rush tuh duh house an staht tuh tell muh fostuh mudduh but she stop me. She dohn wahn me tuh talk bout it. Den duh nex day she ax me wut uh see an fix me sumpm tuh drink an I nebuh did see no mo spirit."

754 [115] Another woman in the community, Bessie Royal,* in relation to her belief in witchcraft and conjure said, "Lots uh people roun yuh say dat hags ride um at night.[69] None ub um ebuh bodduhed me. Dey say dat duh hags is libe folks wut hab duh powuh tuh change demsefs intuh animals an insecs an any udduh ting dey want tuh be.[68]

"I dohn know how it wuz done but muh faduh wuz cunjuhed [15] by a suttn uhmun dat wuz said to be a hag.[69] He go crazy sometimes an ack lak he wuz sked by sumpm chasin im. He git wus and dey take im tuh a root doctuh. Duh root doctuh say he wuz cunjuhed. He hab us ketch a wite chicken

[755]

* *Bessie Royal, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 wich he split open wile duh chicken wuz still libe. He place
•755 dis chicken, blood an all wile it wuz still wome, on top uh muh faduh head an boun it deah.

"Well, muh faduh git bettuh fuh a wile. Den all at once he hab anudduh attack an he die befo duh doctuh could git tuh im. Attuh dis I belieb in cunjuh mo dan ebuh."

115 Later that same day we visited a small Negro cabin set deep in the woods some distance from the highway. Here lived Serina Hall,* born eighty-eight years ago on St. Catherines Island and a former slave of Jacob Waldburg. She said that when she was a small child her master had brought the members of her family to Savannah to be employed as house servants.

The old woman at first disclaimed any knowledge of conjure or the existence of supernatural creatures. After a time, however, her attitude changed and she launched into a lengthy discussion of the current beliefs.

795 "I dohn lak tuh talk bout dem tings," she began, "but I hab tuh belieb wut muh eyes see. I membuh once a man uh knew well got kill. Attuh he wuz buried his spirit use tuh (787) folluh me all duh time. I feel a heat come tuh me, den uh look roun, an deah a shadduh ub a man pass by. I ax duh spirit, 'Wut you want?' Den it leab me lone an I ain seen dat spirit sence." [56, 59]

754 We asked Serina if she had ever known any conjure workers and she said, "Witches an root men is duh same ting. Dey kin tun demsefs intuh any shape, a insec, a cat, aw a dog, aw any kine uh animal.[68] Dey kin go tru any kine uh hole tuh git at yuh.

"Tuh tun intuh sumpm else dey hab tuh hab duh powuh tuh take off deah skin. I heahd bout somebody watchin a hag take off is skin. He git some salt an peppuh an rub it on duh skin.[69a] Wen duh hag go tuh put is skin back on, duh salt an peppuh bun so he couldn git it on. Duh folks wuz

* *Serina Hall, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

drum an fife an we made duh drum frum holluh beehive lawg.[25b] I tell yuh how we done it. Yuh cut duh lawg an tak a deah hide an stretch obuh duh hole. Den yuh cut a hoop ban dat could lock roun duh lawg. Den yuh cut strips uh deah hide an make bans tuh hole duh head cuvvuh tight. How yuh make duh fife? Well, yuh jis cut reed cane.

"Lots uh udduh tings we make our ownsef," said the old man. "All duh fishin cawd made out uh deah hide, and we make mos uh duh house needs sech as cheahs an tables, baskets an buckets an stools, an sometime spoons an beds and cubbuds. Oh, deah's much I caahn tell off han."

Jackson's wife, who was not many years past middle age, came in about this time, greeted us, and sat down to listen.

"Wut dis bout signs?" Jackson laughed. "Sho I knows a few. Deah's some dat foetell wut comin. Wen yuh see duh hawgs bring straw in deah mouf, it's a sho sign wintuh goin tuh be cole. Ef duh roostuh come in duh doe an crow an den go out, it's sho sign uh sorruh in dat house. Duh owl is a true messenjuh uh det,[44] an wen yuh see a bunch uh crows flock up, yuh jis watch out fuh a fewnul. Deah's many signs an wunduhs. Duh Bible tell us so. I had a buckeye fuh many yeahs dat keep off bad luck. I use tuh have a hawse shoe ovuh duh doe uh duh ole house wut bun down,[11a] but I ain put one on dis un yet.

"Rootn?" he shook his head disdainfully. "I seen duh root man say he tak wuhrums an pins an tings out uh people, but I belieb it's some trick. I ain got no fait in dat stuff."

"But I have," put in his wife.* "Muh brothuh-in-law wuz fixed by his wife.[15] Not muh sistuh but anothuh woman. He tun intuh a invalid an laid down helpless fuh twenny-five yeahs. None uh the medical doctuhs couldn hep im, an several root doctuhs wuz called in.[49a] One of um said nuthin couldn be done fuh im cuz the pusson that put im in this fix wuz dead an theah wuzn nobody tuh throw it back tuh. So

* *Della Jackson, Grimball's Point.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahs it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an [12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[8] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[12a]

754 "Yuh heah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies."[18]

795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb
[783] tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
[782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[23] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.'"

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

759 aw sizzuhs tuh cut the pain. Once wen I wuz in pain a mid-
• 755 wife put a peah of sizzuhs unduh muh pilluh. All of a sudden the pain stop right quick. The pain wuz cut right off." 125

115 Josephine Stephens,* one of the older residents of the island, lived a short distance from Liza Basden. Her house was set back several hundred yards from the highway in the midst of a large field. There was no pathway and in order to get to the house we had to cut directly through the field. As we neared the gate at the front of the house a tall gaunt woman, who we learned was Josephine's daughter, ran to meet us. It appeared that the mother had been ill for some time past and the younger woman had been caring for her.

As we talked with Josephine, the daughter stood in an adjoining room, ironing clothes. She stopped every now and then to take part in the conversation. The two women were utterly different types. Josephine, dressed becomingly in (291) a blue and white checked gingham outfit, was the antebellum type of Negro. The daughter, tall, thin and dashing, and probably in her forties, represented a more modern era. She had on a blue checked sport shirt, a white skirt upon the surface of which was the dim outline of the trade name of a flour mill, and a pair of shiny black satin bedroom slippers. Her two front teeth were gold and shone and sparkled as she (301) talked. Two large gold hoop earrings dangled beneath her close cropped straightened hair.

"I bin wukin ovuh at St. Simon," she explained to us. "Befo that I had a good job up Nawth. My mothuh git sick tho, an she need me tuh take keah of huh. That's why I come heah an stay. She gittin tuh be long in yeahs an caahn do so well by uhsef."

The mother did not know exactly how old she was but said she had been about fourteen at the close of the War between the States. We questioned her about her recollections of

* *Josephine Stephens, Harris Neck.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

crops. We all gib tanks fuh duh crop an we dance an sing." [58]

Shortly after this she again fell to mumbling and muttering unintelligibly and seemed unwilling to be drawn again into the conversation. She did confide in us that she had lived in her house for over fifty-eight years and she proudly displayed her immaculate blue outfit which she said her daughter had recently purchased for her. As it was growing late and we had other interviews to obtain in the vicinity, we concluded our visit. The two women urged us to return soon. Setting out again to make an uncertain jagged path across the field, we looked back and saw Josephine, a rather tragic tall figure huddled at the end of the porch. The daughter waved gaily. Her gold earrings glinted in the sun.

When we found Anna Johnson,* she was standing in the front yard of Ed Thorpe's talking with a tall middle-aged woman who, we later learned, was Rosa Sallins,** her niece and Liza Basden's daughter.

The two women walked over to the car and greeted us. We inquired about the various methods the midwife employed and she said, "Tuh cut a pain yuh use a shahp instrument, lak a knife, aw a peah of sizzuhs. Yuh put it unduh duh pilluh on duh bed. Duh pusson who is sick musn see yuh do it aw it wohn wuk. Sometime yuh use a smoothin ion. Dat cut duh pain too." [59b]

Rosa, who had been rather impatiently waiting an opportunity to speak, now offered, "Lots ub duh chillun bawn wid a caul. Ef dey is bawn wid a caul, dey kin see spirits." [4]

The midwife looked solemn. "Folks hab tuh be mighty keahful wen duh chile is bawn lak dat. Ef dey dohn do sumpm bout it, duh chile will be hanted all its life. It'll alluz be fraid uh ghos." [59]

* *Anna Johnson, Harris Neck.*
** *Rosa Sallins, Harris Neck.*

HARRIS NECK

775 "What can be done so that the child won't be haunted?"
845 we asked.

787 "Dey dry duh caul an make a tea out ub it an hab duh
chile drink it.[8] Den all duh ebil will disappeah. Duh chile
• [755] will see ghos, but dey will nebuh hahm um an he wohn be
afraid ub um."

845 Rosa exposed her large white teeth in a broad smile. "I
wuz bawn wid teet. Had two front teet wen I wuz bawn."[66]

Neither Rosa nor the midwife knew the significance of this unusual occurrence, though both women thought it was probably a good luck sign.

856 Anna was reminded of some old remedies that she had
789 found beneficial to teething babies. "Yuh take a alligatuh
tusk an clean it an shine it an hang it roun duh neck uh duh
chile," she explained. "Den yuh kin take duh foot ub a
groun mole. I fuhgits wich one it is. Wich is it, Rosa?"

"Dohn mattuh wich one it is jis so long its duh foefoot."

"Yuh dry it, put it in a sack made out ub a new piece uh clawt an hang it roun duh baby's neck.[8, 12] Sho heps wid duh teethin. I knows plenty bout cuos lak dat," she concluded. "I ain lak deze root folks, dough, das alluz fixin people."

754 Rosa agreed with her aunt. "Sho is plenty rootin yuh.
It goin on all duh time. Deah's plenty uh root people wut
is alluz wukin gense folks."[15]

"Dey git a grudge gense yuh an put down sumpm fuh yuh," supplemented Anna, "an pretty soon yuh dohn know yuh ownsef."

"Sometime dey put it in yuh food," this from Rosa again. "Ef yuh got a enemy, yuh dohn dare eat wut yuh lak. Nebuh know wen deah's sumpm in duh food, an ef deah is, yuh sho wohn las. Cose ef yuh weahs a han, it'll wahn yuh
[789] an keep duh cunjuh frum wukkin.[12a, c, d] Lots uh folks carries some kine uh chahm all duh time."[8]

"Some uh our folks yuh keep frizzle chicken. Dey dig up

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

342 sturdy oak stumps. The front steps were three oak logs of increasing diameter that made a massive if difficult tread
351 to the door. The house was in a large grove of oak trees and the usual plows, iron pots, and implements were scat-
423 tered about the hard packed, sand yard. Jim Myers owned a good deal of land and there was a well-to-do feeling about the whole place, though it was old-fashioned and isolated in the extreme.

115 Uncle Jim * (Plate XXIII, XXIV) came down the log steps to greet us. His bare feet manipulated the round treads easily. He was a big man, slightly bent from rheumatism, very black with a white fringe of a beard. His eyes
• [755] were rheumy with age. Around his ankles were two brass wires, which helped to take the pain out of his legs.[13b]

"Uncle Jim," we said, "tell us about the times when you were a boy."

Uncle Jim laughed in condescending good humor. "Lawd, missus, thas so long ago I ain thought bout them days in a long time and theah ain much tuh tell. Ise bawn jis twenny mile from yuh on Mr. John Tompkins' plantation and I lived roun yuh all muh life. I bin heah on Mush Bluff Ilun a long time."

829 We asked him if he had known any Africans when he was a young man.

567 "Yes'm, I sho knowd plenty of em. Theah wuz a lawg house that belonged to Mr. Hallowes wich use tuh set right ovuh theah in them woods until about ten yeahs ago. That was the house that they kep the wile Africans in. It had big ion rings in the flo. They chained them wile Africans theah till they wuz tame. They'd take em out one by one and they'd give em a stick an put em in the fiel with people wut knowd how tuh wuk and that way they lun how too. They sked to give em a hoe. It's shahp and they might frail roun with it."

* *Jim Myers, Mush Bluff Island.*

A, [See Category 142, plates following p. xxxii--EE and FF--Analyst]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

"Hark! from the tomb a doleful sound
My ears, attend the cry;
Ye living men, come view the ground
Where you must shortly lie."

. . . A prayer was offered. . . . This concluded the services at the grave. No burial or commital service was read. . . . At a subsequent time, when all the relatives and friends could be brought together a big funeral sermon was preached by some of the antebellum negro preachers.

The presence of a plantation slave "doctor" is reminiscent of the Ba-Kongo *nganga*, who employed life-affirming *nkisi* to heal and ward off bad medicine or *kindoki*. The charm did not work for the plantation slave, and the large funeral turn-out may represent the people's desire to protect themselves from whatever evil had caused Mary's death as well as to express their respect. Passing the woman's baby back and forth over her coffin was a well-known Gullah graveside custom. "Dead moder will hant de baby," Gullahs explained, and "worry him in his sleep." A similar custom among the BaKongo was women crossing back and forth over the graveside of a woman who died in childbirth, hoping that such a fate would not befall them. Singing at the grave was also part of the BaKongo send-off. The funeral, a lavish affair, would take place when all members of the clan could gather and when enough food could be collected.[13]

Thus another aspect of Gullah religion was a syncretic blend of belief in the efficacy of Christian salvation, the prevalence of the living dead, and the awesome powers of conjuration. It was sometimes difficult to determine where they believed the most power rested. At any rate, their expression, "Love God and fear the devil" indicates that, as a precautionary measure, they preferred to respect the authority and domain of both. For Gullahs saw no contradiction in being firm proponents of the Baptist faith and protecting themselves against forces of the supernatural as well. In spite of the Gullahs' strong profession of Christianity, Laura Towne noted that "They believe in the evil eye, and also in the power of a good eye for healing," and that "they are afraid of being alone at night, or of sleeping alone, for fear 'the hag will ride we.' " A slaveholding South Carolina minister remembered Elihu, a "devout, old creditable deacon" of the church and highly respected exhorter in the slave quarters. Upon passing the old man's cabin, the owner observed an inverted horseshoe over the door. Since Elihu's skill as a hostler was well known, the owner

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

757 brown pea liquor as a wash for smallpox, a mixture of lard and mocking-bird bush (cassena) as an ointment for smallpox, soot for cuts, and lemon juice and ashes for colds.

757 One woman reproved a member of the research staff
•755 because he threw away two rats which had been killed in
[825 a trap. She said that the rats were just the thing she needed for a tea which she wanted to brew for her ten-year-old son to cure him of bed-wetting. The same
[826 woman believed that her failure to "bind" the boy—that is, to wrap cloth tightly around his abdomen—while he was a baby had resulted in his being weak physically. An-
[827 other woman believed that if a stammering child drank water from a bell he would be cured.

854 Many mothers with babes in arms will call the baby's
774 spirit when they start home after a visit, believing that the spirit might stay behind and evil consequences ensue un-
[777 less it is called. It is considered bad luck to let a baby
764 be near the coffin at a funeral. If one is present he is passed
789 over the coffin from one person to another in order to prevent his spirit from accompanying the dead. Mr.
854 Wildy, teacher of blacksmithing at Penn School and a
764 member of the quartet, said that on one occasion his in-
789 fant was taken to a funeral. He had thought nothing of the superstition, but other people at the funeral became very much disturbed on seeing the baby and would give him no peace until he had passed the child across the coffin.

764 As elsewhere in the South, the St. Helena people put
[171 on the grave the things last used by a person. These are usually china, glasses, pitchers, medicine bottles, and other inexpensive things, but sometimes articles of value are left on the graves—antique clocks, vases, and the like.